

Testimony to the Appropriations Committee
Subcommittee on Elementary and Secondary Education
Public Hearing: Governor's Proposed Budget.
February 16, 2016

Good Evening Senator Slossberg, Representative Fleischmann, and esteemed members of the Appropriations Subcommittee on Elementary and Secondary Education. Thank you for this opportunity to present testimony today.

My name is Diara Vicedomini. I am a senior at Suffield High School and a member of the twelfth class of the Capitol Regional Interdistrict Leadership Academy, also known as CRILA. CRILA is an immersive program that teaches local youth in our regional community about service, responsibility and diversity. It has personally helped all of us here tonight in improving upon ourselves as leaders.

I am testifying today, asking that you restore funding for the CRILA program. Like any program, CRILA needs funding, and without the support of the state, CRILA is at risk. This year, the State Department of Education unexpectedly cut the funding to the CRILA program after twelve years. I personally believe this is an injustice to students in the Greater Hartford community. We implore you to ask the State to reconsider this decision.

CRILA is one of the most respected programs in the region, as well as one of the only ones that gives back to the community. Each year CRILA students pick a local issue on which they are passionate about changing and we work on a service project that will help benefit members of the community against this issue. Funding us is not a selfish move, we are dedicated to doing our part to make Connecticut the best state it can be.

What CREC needs is \$80,000 next year to run the CRILA program. This funding is needed to keep the program up and running as well as to pay for the Outward Bound experience, which is an integral element of CRILA. Speaking from personal experience, spending a week in the mountains of Colorado singlehandedly taught me more about myself than anything I have done in my life thus far. There was something truly life changing about climbing a mountain, especially as an uncoordinated asthmatic. It was something I never would have thought myself capable of, and it made me realize that there are many things that may seem out of reach until you try. So I stand here before you, asking you to achieve what may seem unachievable: Please find it in your hearts, and in your budget to fund our program, so CRILA can impact even more of our community.